



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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RAPIST SENTENCED TO MORE THAN 23 YEARS ON RELATED HOSTAGE TAKING CHARGES

PHOENIX – A member of a violent group of alien smugglers who held over 100 people hostage at a Phoenix residence in January 2003, has been sentenced to more than 23 years in prison. Fabian Franco-Saenz, 21, of Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico, was sentenced here to 280 months less an adjustment of 48 months for time already served and fined \$10,000 by U.S. District Judge Stephen M. McNamee on Tuesday. Franco-Saenz had pleaded guilty to a two count Information charging him with Conspiracy to Take Hostages and Conspiracy to Harbor Illegal Aliens on September 3, 2004.

Seven other members of the Franco Alien Smuggling Organization have been charged and convicted for their role in the hostage taking. Four of them, Jesus Medina-Nevarez, Ruben Franco-Plaza, Juan Franco-Medrano, and Gerardo Lazaro-Ascencio, are scheduled to be sentenced on March 6, 2007.

While held hostage at gunpoint, the victims were beaten with fists, kicked, pistol whipped, and threatened with death. One victim had his face burned with a cigarette while at least one other victim had a plastic bag put over his face and was beaten until he could not breathe. During the hostage taking conspiracy, Franco-Saenz raped a female victim at gunpoint for which he was charged and convicted in Maricopa County Superior Court. He received a sentence of 14 years imprisonment for sexual assault and 100 years probation for attempted sexual assault.

Franco-Saenz was sentenced on the state charges on September 5, 2003 and has been serving his state sentence while awaiting sentencing in his federal case. The defendant will be returned to the state system to complete the remaining 10 years of his state sentence after which he will be placed in federal custody to begin serving the remaining 232 months of his federal sentence. Franco-Saenz will begin paying his \$10,000 fine while in custody.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Pinal County Sheriff's Office, and the Phoenix Police Department. The prosecution was handled by Lisa Jennis Settel, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-04-965-PHX-SMM
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